

9-2013

# DANC 404.01: Advanced Techniques in Modern Dance

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University of Montana, School of Theatre and Dance  
71609 - DANC 400 - 01: **Modern IV** 3 credits  
73978 - DANC 404 - 01: **Advanced Techniques in Modern Dance** 3 credits  
Fall 2013      M W F 10:40am-12:00noon      PARTV 005

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Office: PARTV 186  
Office hours: **Wed 1:00-2:00**  
**Thurs 9:00-11:00**

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**"The truest expression of a people is in its dance and in its music. Bodies never lie."**  
~Agnes de Mille

## Course Description

A contemporary modern dance class inviting advanced students to confront complex phrase work with an awareness of the changing body relationship – mind, body, emotion, energy, performance... while demonstrating proficiency in various motion techniques. The intent of the course is successful upon a continued commitment towards, and consistency in, a professional and positive attitude, refining technique, creative interpretation and artistic expression. Additionally, stepping into a leadership roll will be the expectation. There will be an underlying emphasis on alignment and kinesiology sound movement patterns.

## Objectives

- To introduce contemporary dance technique philosophies, somatic approaches, partner techniques, improvisation and performance disciplines in a safe yet challenging environment.
- To provide an outlet in which students are encouraged to advance and further develop their technical, kinesthetic, intellectual and creative capacities in movement.
- To demonstrate personal ownership (voice) of movement.
- To interact with other dancers, creating a shared experience of phrase work and improvisation.
- To practice professionalism, etiquette and performance ability – self-responsibility, broad qualitative range, positive/inquisitive attitude, versatility, knowledge and investigation of individual strengths and weaknesses
- To critically evaluate and objectively discuss dance performance (including technique and expression)
- To defend a grand appreciation of dance
  - ❖ **Advanced Techniques** – in the combined level classroom of this year, advanced dancers will assume a roll of leadership. This may be executed by strategic placement in the studio, volunteering to perform with a group needing more assistance and serving as a reference and a consistent positive example.

## Course Content

As an **advancing dancer proficient in developing technique, artistry and etiquette** it is expected that by the completion of this course the student will be able to achieve the below mentioned elements: (*Italicized items indicate the skill to be acquired in Level IV/Advanced technique, non-italicized items reflect skills that have been acquired previously*)

- A. Demonstration of Line and Form
  - a. Students are proficient in ability to move upper body without displacing the pelvis
  - b. Students excel in their understanding of rotated and parallel positions
  - c. Students are strongly integrated in their bodies
  - d. Students have a strong sense of line and shape
  - e. Students are able to manipulate line and form with ease
  - f. *Students demonstrate the capacity to create and dissolve line and form with conscious, in the moment investment*
- B. Dynamic Alignment
  - a. Students excel in their understanding of alignment
  - b. Students excel in their ability to execute plie (demi and grand) in parallel, first, second, third positions and demi plie in fourth position
  - c. Students excel in their ability to land from jumps

- d. Students excel in their understanding of alignment in vertical and non-vertical positions
  - e. Students understand pelvic alignment and the neutral pelvis
  - f. Students have clear head-tail coordination in all body patterns (core-distal, body-half, upper-lower, cross-lateral, spiral)
  - g. Students are able to achieve freedom from excess joint tension
  - h. *Students demonstrate the ability to move through complex phrases with sound functioning and awareness of changing body relationship*
- C. Effective Body Patterning
- a. Students excel in their ability to coordinate breath with movement
  - b. Students understand all concepts of Body Patterning:  
    - \*Breath \*Core/Distal \*Head/Tail \*Body Half \*Upper/Lower
    - \*Cross lateral \*Contra lateral \*Spiral
  - c. Students excel in their ability to fall and recover the center of the body
  - d. Students excel in their ability to execute turns, both stationary and locomotor
  - e. Students are proficient at isolating thigh joint in retire, extensions and battement
  - f. Students excel in their ability to turn off their vertical axis
  - g. *Students demonstrate freedom from tension*
  - h. *Students demonstrate efficient use of energy*
- D. Spatial Awareness
- a. Students excel in their understanding of kinesphere, personal space and shared space
  - b. Students excel in their understanding of basic partnering skills
  - c. Students excel in their ability to move within space while maintaining relationship to others
  - d. Students excel in their ability to dance according to varied facings
  - e. Students excel in their spatial awareness and spatial intent
  - f. Students excel in their ability to interact with other dancers
  - g. Students excel in their ability to make dance a shared experience
  - h. Students excel in their ability to represent clear directional and spatial intent
  - i. *Students demonstrate the ability to readily adapt to new performance/dance environments*
- E. Rhythmic Accuracy
- a. Students excel in their understanding of time
  - b. Students excel in their ability to dance with an awareness of the beginnings and endings of phrases
  - c. Students excel in their ability to accent movement
  - d. Students excel in their ability to distinguish the center of the beat
  - e. Students excel in their ability to dance within complex rhythmic structures, counting patterns and unconventional time signatures
  - f. Students are skillful in dancing to traditional rhythms (3s, 4s, 6s, 8s) and unconventional collections of counts with overall musicality
  - g. *Students demonstrate rhythmic sophistication*
  - h. *Students demonstrate the ability to work with internal and external rhythmic structures*
- F. Initiation and Follow-Through
- a. Students excel in their awareness of body part initiation
  - b. Students excel in their ability to use weight and momentum in body part initiation
  - c. Students excel in their ability to distinguish successive or sequential vs. simultaneous movement
  - d. Students move with both internal and external focus
  - e. Students excel in their understanding of point of initiation
  - f. Students demonstrate strong body/eye focus
  - g. *Students develop sophisticated demonstration of multiple initiation points and the ability to create focus in the body with clear follow-through*
- G. Strength, Flexibility and Endurance
- a. Students have strong torso, feet, arms and overall alignment
  - b. Students descend to and ascend from the floor safely
  - c. Students have familiarity with proper stretching techniques for major muscle groups
  - d. Students have the ability to easily complete a two-hour technique class: demonstrating the endurance to complete a two hour class without strain
  - e. Student have clear articulation in feet
  - f. Students easily complete long and complex movement sequences
  - g. Students excel in their ability to do floor work and take weight into the upper body
  - h. Students understand developing “stability through mobility”
  - i. Students have the capacity to move through sequences with appropriately applied energy



- j. *Students demonstrate the capacity to individually distinguish and manifest dynamic, spatial and expressive requirements from the beginning the end of movements throughout the entire class*
- H. Professionalism, Etiquette and Performance Ability
  - a. Students excel in their understanding of movement quality
  - b. Students excel in their concentration efforts
  - c. Students demonstrate willingness to experiment
  - d. Students have an appreciation for different movement approaches
  - e. Students move through the space with confidence
  - f. Students have peer assessment skills
  - g. *Students develop self-responsibility*
  - h. *Students develop a broad qualitative range*
  - i. *Students practice a professional attitude at all times*
  - j. *Students take artistic risk with the interpretation of material and demonstration of performance quality*
  - k. *Students learn and interpret material quickly with attention to detail and nuance*
  - l. *Students develop a personal performance persona*
  - m. *Students exhibit a strong ensemble awareness*
  - n. *Students demonstrate knowledge and integration of individual skills, strengths and weaknesses*

## Class Structure

Casual **in class assignments** in spontaneous composition and performance will take place on a semi-regular basis. These may be individual or in small groups. Class time will be dedicated to group choreography assignments. Please be respectful of your peers and recognize the importance of your consistent contribution.

Class begins promptly at **10:40am**. Students arriving more than 10 minutes late will not be permitted to take class (for safety purposes and etiquette practices), and will instead observe and take notes. Class will end at **12:00pm**. Students are required to remain in class until its conclusion with the closing circle. Consistent tardiness or early departure from class will result in the lowering of one's grade.

To **avoid injury**, please come to class prepared to move at the start of class. (If you know you need extra time/space to stay safe, arrive early.) Please notify the instructor of any injury (current or past) that may affect your full performance in class.

Should a student observe class, it is expected that the student engage by watching the class and dutifully apply what is being taught and discussed to her/his own improvement in class. This **observation should result in a set of notes** that will be submitted to the instructor at the conclusion of the class observed. While observing class, students are required to be mindful and quiet as to not detract from the teaching and performance efficacy of the teacher, classmates (and accompanist when applicable). More than two observations equal an absence. \*see "Expectations" for more on participation/attendance. If a student sits out for a week of class (3 classes), an entire letter grade will be deducted from the student's grade.

Your **dance attire** should not restrict or hide your movement. Take into account that there is potential for any part of the body to be in contact with the floor, at any given time; and for safety, keep the body warm from the beginning until the end of class = bring extra clothing. Movement will be experienced with bare feet. It is *highly* recommended that dancers own and bring kneepads to class. These can be ordered on line at: [www.contactquarterly.com](http://www.contactquarterly.com). Please, no street shoes in the dance studios.

Physical contact and touch will be used as teaching methods to correct alignment and suggest new patterns of movement. The teacher and fellow students will facilitate this. If you have any concerns with this style of teaching/learning please let the instructor know, as she will find alternative methods.



## Expectations: Attendance and Grading Policy

**Attendance** is important in any field, but vital in the field of dance. Learning to dance requires that your body do it. You will not gain in flexibility, and strength, or in your ability to pick up movement or generate your own movement by hearing about what happened from a classmate, or reading a book. In other words, there is no way to make up the material you miss. STUDENTS ARE EXPECTED TO BE IN EVERY CLASS. However, knowing that unpredictable circumstances may arise, students are granted one permissible absence. Students may also make up two absences by participating in (if appropriate) or watching, *and* writing a one-page observation of another dance class. AFTER A STUDENT HAS USED HER/HIS SINGLE ABSENCE AND TWO MAKEUPS, THE STUDENT WILL BE DOCKED ONE-THIRD OF A GRADE FOR EVERY ABSENCE FOLLOWING. (see attached: UM Dance Program - Injury Policy)

**Grading:** Dance is different from many other fields in that a student's work is not as quantifiable as it is in some other subjects, such as history or math. For this reason grading is not assigned a point breakdown. To earn an "A" a student must:

- Consistently reach above and beyond average participation
  - Demonstrate proficiency in the areas listed within the "Course Content" of this syllabus.
  - Have an energetic, attentive and inquisitive attitude
  - Progress over the semester
  - And of course, fulfill all attendance, critique, journal and self-assessment requirements.
- Students may receive an "incomplete" (I) only if there are exceptional circumstances, which have been discussed with the instructor.

## Performance Attendance & Written Assignments

Students are required to attend **four artistic events** during the fall term. (*plus strongly encouraged* to attend dance events at large: in Missoula, at the Myrna Loy Center in Helena and at the Hamilton Center for the Performing Arts.)

Performances marked with a \* are required events. Of the other performances listed, select 1 (totaling 4 over the course of the semester) to see and respond to.

- \* **Dancers on Location**, October 12-13 (Sat-Sun) noon, Mansfield Library Mall, free
- *Momix - Botanica*, November 8 (Fri), 8:00PM, Hamilton PAC,
- \* **Dance Studio Works**, November 15-16 (Fri-Sat), 6:30 & 8:30 each night, Open Space, \$5 one show, or \$8 both shows. Tickets at the door
- *Headwaters Dance Company Annual Gala Concert*, Nov 21-23, MCT Center for the Performing Arts
- \* **Dance Up Close**, Dec 3-7 (Tues-Sat), 7:30 PM, Masquer Theatre, \$6 Required Student (\$9 Gen Adm)
- Any **Theatre** production, **Music** concert or **Gallery** exhibit

The instructor will provide detailed guidelines for written critique(s), and other response projects. Students will need to give specific examples in their writing, so it is recommended that she/he take notes either during or immediately following each event. The student's grade will be lowered by one letter grade for each assignment that is not submitted.

## Journal/Self-Assessment Writings

Throughout the course of the semester, you will be asked to reflect upon and assess your growth in this class. These writings may take place in class, but most likely outside of the studio. In lieu of a hard-copy journal your teacher will provide you with prompts, in class and via Moodle. Included in your direct response to a question (on Moodle), feel free to include details regarding your development as a dancer, performer, artist, global citizen... Include aspects of what is going well, where you are struggling, what your questions are...

## Odds and Ends

- Additional assignments *may* be scheduled throughout the semester at the discretion of the instructor.
- **\*\* We will meet during finals week on Monday, December 9<sup>th</sup> 8:00-10:00am \*\* *date/time may be negotiable***
- If at any point you feel further discussion would aid your development, please schedule a meeting with the instructor.
- If you are sick or injured please talk to the instructor as soon possible before class. This includes any pre-existing conditions/injuries that should be shared.
- If you get injured during class get the instructor's attention immediately!
- Restrooms / locker rooms are located across the hall.
- **Locker rentals are required for all students in the dance classes.** We recommend that you do not leave personal belongings unattended in the dressing rooms or hallways, as thefts unfortunately occur. Backpacks and personal belongings are not allowed in dance studios, with the exception of water bottles. Lockers must be rented for \$7/semester, or \$13/two semesters. For details, see the Dance Program administrative assistant, PARTV 199 (door across from women's dressing room, then up the stairs.)

## Academic Misconduct and the Student Conduct Code

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the Student Conduct Code. The Code is available for review online at [http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student\\_conduct.php](http://life.umt.edu/vpsa/student_conduct.php).

All Theatre & Dance students must have an in-depth knowledge of the practices and procedures outlined in the School of Theatre & Dance *Student Handbook*. The *Handbook* is available online at <http://www.umt.edu/theatredance/about/handbook>.

There is inherent risk involved in many Theatre & Dance classes as they are very physical in nature. Please proceed through class, shop time, or rehearsal with caution. Always be mindful of your personal safety and the safety of others. Students participating in class/shop/rehearsal/performance do so at their own risk.

Due to safety considerations, at **no** point during a student's time spent in class or serving on a production (in any capacity) should non-enrolled persons be guests of that student **without my consent**. Presence of such unauthorized persons in a class, shop, or any backstage/off-stage area will negatively affect a student's grade.

*The University of Montana assures equal access to instruction through collaboration between students with disabilities, instructors, and Disability Services for Students (DSS). If you think you may have a disability adversely affecting your academic performance, and you have not already registered with DSS, please contact DSS in Lommasson 154. I will work with you and DSS to provide an appropriate accommodation.*



**University of Montana  
Dance Program**

Injury Protocol for all Dance Practicum Courses

(Dance Technique, Improvisation, Composition, Pedagogy courses)

In effort to avoid injury, the Dance Faculty encourage all dance students to take responsibility for their bodies prior to the beginning of dance class. It is critical that the dancer be nourished and hydrated, rested and dressed appropriately for class (i.e. layers and kneepads for modern, ballet slippers and tights for ballet class). Additionally, dancers must arrive to class and begin to warm up their bodies to effectively prepare for class. Each dancer has unique needs, the time before class begins is there for each dancer to begin preparation of the mind and body for dance.

Chronic Injury (Tendonitis, Bursitis, Fasciitis)

If a dancer experiences a chronic, ongoing injury requiring that s/he take relative rest sit out of class then it is assumed that the dancer cannot fulfill the requirements of the class. This dancer will not be able to earn an "A" in this class.

If the dancer needs to practice relative rest, it is expected that s/he do everything as normal in class. If the injury hurts, it's important to not quit class but instead learn to modify to complete the class.

Once the dancer sits out of class, s/he cannot reenter. The dancer is done for the day.

If the dancer must sit out of class, it is critical that s/he communicate with the instructor, ask permission to sit out of class. At this time it is expected that the dancer explain what is the injury is that requires observation of class.

Once a dancer experiences injury, s/he must see a doctor and receive a prognosis that explains what the injury is, what the dancer can do, what the dancer should specifically avoid and a timeline that indicates when it is safe to return to full physical activity.

The dancer must also see a physical therapist and begin a rehabilitation program. When seeing a physical therapist, it is critical for the dancer to tell the therapist exactly what her/his dancing entails, how the body is used, what parts of the body are used and taxed in dance classes. The dancer needs to ask what part of class s/he should be doing and what part of class should be avoided. The dancer needs to ask when you can return to more complete physical activity, discuss the timeline. Then, the dancer must create for her/himself a checklist of what can be done and what needs to be modified or omitted. This plan must be shared with the instructor.

When the dancer must sit out of class, it is expected that the dancer complete her/his physical therapy exercises while observing class. If the dancer is unable to complete such exercises, then s/he must discuss with the instructor.

Observation Policy:

Should an injury or illness require that the dancer sit out and observe, her/his grade will reflect lack of participation in class.

Traumatic/Acute Injury:

If the dancer experiences a traumatic injury that requires s/he be absent and observing class, the dancer has the following choices:

1. Medically withdraw from the course
2. Drop the course and add a 1credit Independent Study
  - This option would enable the dancer to come back to full participation in the class over a longer course of time. It would be expected that the dancer observe class, complete her/his physical therapy exercises during class and communicate a plan of reentry into the class with direct doctor

supervision over a specific period of time. The instructor of the class must approve this plan of action.

- The 1 credit Independent Study would not count towards the dancer's required technique credits should s/he be pursuing a dance major or minor. If it becomes necessary for timely graduation, the student has the right to petition the course to be considered towards her/his major/minor. The faculty will then review and approve (or not) the request.

Illness (this does not include hangovers):

If you are sick, please stay home.

Absence Policy:

For a class that meets 3 times a week, each student is permitted 1 excusable absence. For each absence thereafter, 1/3 of a letter grade is docked from the student's grade. If a student sits out for an entire week of class (3 classes), an entire letter grade is docked from the student's grade.

For classes that meet 2 times a week, each student is permitted 1 excusable absence. For each absence thereafter, 1/2 of a letter grade is docked from the student's grade. If a student sits out for an entire week of class (2 classes), an entire letter grade is docked from the student's grade.

Make Up Policy:

For a class that meets 3 times a week, each student is permitted to make up 2 classes.

For a class that meets 2 times a week, each student is permitted to make up 1 class.